

National
Gallery of Art

Film



Summer 19



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The summer season opens with the series *Animals in Japanese Cinema*, organized to complement the exhibition *The Life of Animals in Japanese Art*. Other series featured during the summer months include *Moons and Celestial Bodies*, presented in conjunction with the exhibition *By the Light of the Silvery Moon: A Century of Lunar Photographs to Apollo 11*, as well as a pair of programs honoring the life and work of two of the most influential experimental filmmakers of our time, *Essential Cinema: Jonas Mekas and Barbara Hammer: Boundless*. A new restoration of Djibril Diop Mambéty's 1992 *Hyenas* and the world premiere of Bryan Dematteis's *Black Artists' Group: Creation Equals Movement*, on the history of the BAG collective that began in Saint Louis in the late 1960s, are also planned for the summer. German filmmaker Lutz Dammbeck discusses his landmark 2003 documentary *The Net*, Ishmael Reed appears with a new restoration of *Personal Problems*, and Phil Grabsky is present for the Washington premiere of *Degas: Passion for Perfection*. The season closes with the series *Serious Games: Documentary Art between Fact and Fiction* presented in association with Goethe-Institut Washington.

July



3	Wed	1:00	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Ran p15
5	Fri	1:00 3:00	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Godzilla p16 Animals in Japanese Cinema: Mothra p16
6	Sat	12:30 3:30	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Horse p16 Animals in Japanese Cinema: The Hidden Fortress p16
7	Sun	4:00	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Seven Samurai p17
12	Fri	12:00 2:30	Animals in Japanese Cinema: I Am a Cat p17 Animals in Japanese Cinema: Black Cat p18
13	Sat	12:30 2:00 4:00	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Animals in Animation I: Kōji Yamamura and Image Forum p18 Animals in Japanese Cinema: Animals in Animation II: Osamu Tezuka and Kihachirō Kawamoto p18 Animals in Japanese Cinema: Cinema Kabuki: Triple Lion Dance; Heron Maiden p19
14	Sun	4:00	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Mādadayo p19
19	Fri	12:30 2:30	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Akanishi Kakita p20 Animals in Japanese Cinema: If Cats Disappeared from the World p20
20	Sat	11:00 3:00	Moons and Celestial Bodies: The Right Stuff p23 Moons and Celestial Bodies: Cycles, Tides, and Rhythms: The Moon on Film p24
21	Sun	4:30	Moons and Celestial Bodies: The Man Who Fell to Earth p24
27	Sat	12:30 3:30	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Pom Poko p20 Animals in Japanese Cinema: Princess Raccoon p21
28	Sun	4:00	Animals in Japanese Cinema: Dreams p21

Films are shown in the East Building Auditorium, unless otherwise noted, in original formats whenever possible. Seating for all events is on a first-come, first-seated basis. Doors open thirty minutes before showtime. For more information, visit nga.gov/film, email film-department@nga.gov, or call (202) 842-6799.



August

3	Sat	2:00	Jonas Mekas: Guns of the Trees; The Brig	p27
4	Sun	4:00	Jonas Mekas: Walden	p28
10	Sat	2:00	Jonas Mekas: Notes on the Circus; Time and Fortune Vietnam Newsreel; Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania	p28
		4:00	Jonas Mekas: Self-Portrait; Paradise Not Yet Lost (a.k.a. Oona's Third Year)	p29
11	Sun	4:00	Jonas Mekas: Lost Lost Lost	p29
17	Sat	2:00	Jonas Mekas: He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life	p30
18	Sun	4:30	Jonas Mekas: Short Films: 1982 – 1996	p30
24	Sat	1:00	Black Maria Program 1	p33
		3:30	Black Maria Program 2	p33
25	Sun	4:30	Jonas Mekas: This Side of Paradise: Fragments of an Unfinished Biography; Birth of a Nation	p30
31	Sat	2:00	Jonas Mekas: Sleepless Night Stories	p31

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September

1	Sun	12:00	Jonas Mekas: Notes on an American Film Director at Work: Martin Scorsese p31
		2:00	Jonas Mekas: Out-Takes from the Life of a Happy Man p31
		4:30	Hyenas p11
7	Sat	12:00	Serious Games: Lessons of Darkness p41
		2:00	Barbara Hammer: The Beginning: Early Short Films, 1968 – 1980 p35
		4:00	Barbara Hammer: The Middle: Short Films from the 1980s p36
8	Sun	4:00	Barbara Hammer: Hammer Time: Collaboration and Community p36
11	Wed	6:30	Serious Games: War at a Distance; Serious Games I – IV (at Goethe-Institut Washington) p43
14	Sat	12:30	Serious Games: Again/Noch Einmal p42
		3:30	Black Artists' Group: Creation Equals Movement; Sweet Willie Rollbar's Orientation p11
15	Sun	4:00	The Net p12
21	Sat	2:00	Personal Problems p13
22	Sun	4:00	Barbara Hammer: The Never Ending p37
28	Sat	1:00	Serious Games: November; In Free Fall p42
		3:30	Degas: Passion for Perfection p13

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Special Events

Sep 1 – 28

Hyenas

Washington premiere of the restoration

Sun Sep 1 (4:30)



Senegalese master Djibril Diop Mambéty's *Hyenas* is a satirical adaptation of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *The Visit*. A newly wealthy woman returning to her poor desert village proposes a deal to the citizenry: she will give the village her fortune in exchange for the murder of the local man who years earlier seduced and abandoned her, leaving her with a child. "I do not refuse the word didactic," said Mambéty of his body of work. "My task was to identify the enemy of humankind: money... I think my target is clear." (Djibril Diop Mambéty, 1992, subtitles, 110 minutes) *Restored from original negative by Thelma Film AG with the support of Cinémathèque suisse at Eclair Cinema*

Black Artists' Group: Creation Equals Movement

World premiere

followed by **Sweet Willie Rollbar's Orientation**

Bryan Dematteis, George Sams, and Brent Hayes

Edwards in person

Sat Sep 14 (3:30)

The arts collective Black Artists' Group (BAG) began in Saint Louis in the late 1960s with the intention of raising consciousness, battling social injustice, and exploring the far reaches of experimental performance. Several African American artists' collectives were forming across the nation during that pivotal political time; however, BAG was unique for its blend of music, poetry, drama, dance, and the visual arts. This new documentary, *Black Artists' Group: Creation Equals Movement*, includes archival footage of BAG members such as Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, and Shirley LeFlore, among others, with interviews of surviving participants. (Bryan Dematteis, 2019, approximately 60 minutes)

An astonishing document of the post-Black Arts period, *Sweet Willie Rollbar's Orientation* was made by Hemphill, poet K. Curtis Lyle, actor Malinke Elliott, and other BAG members. The film includes a series of fragmented, surreal "trickster tale" vignettes set in the detritus of Saint Louis's inner city. (BAG, 1972, 30 minutes) *Shown in conjunction with the exhibition "Oliver Lee Jackson: Recent Paintings"; discussion follows with Bryan Matteis, George Sams, Brent Hayes Edwards, and National Gallery of Art curator Harry Cooper*

The Net

Lutz Dammbeck in person

Sun Sep 15 (4:00)



In the 1960s, a group of visionaries in cybernetics, systems theory, multimedia art, and military research came to the fore and ultimately affected the future of communications and even mass behavior with the development of the internet. In *The Net (Das Netz)*, writer, artist, and filmmaker Lutz Dammbeck weaves a complex tale about the members of this loosely knit group, which included Marshall McLuhan, Timothy Leary, Stewart Brand, Ken Kesey, and Nam June Paik, among others. The question arose: What does the unlimited development of information technology mean for human-kind? Among other strands, the film follows the case of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, who believed he was battling the growing technologizing of the world. (Lutz Dammbeck, 2003, subtitles, 121 minutes) *Supported by DEFA Film Library, Goethe-Institut Washington, DEFA-Stiftung, and Deutschlandjahr USA*

Personal Problems

Ishmael Reed in person

Sat Sep 21 (2:00)

From 1979 to 1981, with little money but extraordinary talent, a group of avant-garde artists assembled in New York to produce what poet, playwright, artist, and essayist Ishmael Reed calls an "experimental soap opera" with a largely African American cast and crew. Unusual in the history of cinema, the actors in *Personal Problems* define their own roles and then improvise, avoiding the stereotypes usually offered by Hollywood. After a flurry of showings in the early 1980s, the remaining fifty-four video copies of *Personal Problems* lay in Reed's attic for three decades. The film was restored for theatrical rerelease just last year. "A startling, totally idiosyncratic work of art" — Artforum. (Ishmael Reed and Bill Gunn, 1980, 165 minutes)

Degas: Passion for Perfection

Phil Grabsky in person

Washington premiere

Sat Sep 28 (3:30)



From the London-based series *Exhibition on Screen*, *Degas: Passion for Perfection* journeys from the streets of Paris to an exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Degas's persistent experimentation with technique and his resolve to capture everyday life in an unconventional manner are the central themes. Using letters and accounts from friends and commentators, the film reveals complex truths behind one of the most influential French artists of the late nineteenth century. (David Bickerstaff for Seventh Art Productions, 2018, 85 minutes) *Discussion follows with producer Phil Grabsky and National Gallery of Art curator Mary Morton*



Animals in Japanese Cinema

Jul 3 – 28

Animals play many expressive roles in Japanese cinema, both in their own right and in their dealings with humans. With examples from a variety of film genres including *jidai-geki* (period drama), *bungei eiga* (literary narrative), and *kaijū eiga* (monster film), and comprising a selection of animations, shorts, and fiction features, a number of these works also make use of elements from other art forms such as Kabuki and Noh theater traditions. The animal characters — whether playing major or minor roles, or simply added as embellishments — include mythological creatures, talking animals, monsters and shape-shifters, household pets, and animals admired for their beauty or athleticism. *Animals in Japanese Cinema* has been organized in conjunction with the exhibition *The Life of Animals in Japanese Art* and is copresented with support from The Japan Foundation as part of Japan 2019, a series of events highlighting Japanese arts and culture in the United States throughout the year. With special thanks to Marty Gross, Kenji Matsumoto, and Koji Nozaki.

Ran

Wed Jul 3 (1:00)

Reworking *King Lear* in a feudal Japanese setting, Akira Kurosawa blends William Shakespeare's tragedy with the story of Mōri Motonari, a notable old daimyo who cunningly strengthened the power of his clan. According to legend, the fearsome warlord divided his kingdom among three sons — thus replacing the daughters in *King Lear*, with comparable consequences. With hundreds of horses on screen, thousands of meticulous medieval costumes, a full-scale replica of an ancient castle, and a grandly staged boar hunt, *Ran* became the most expensive Japanese production at that point in history. Costume designer Emi Wada won an Academy Award for her work. (Akira Kurosawa, 1985, subtitles, 162 minutes)

Godzilla

Fri Jul 5 (1:00)



A primordial monster disturbed by nuclear bomb tests strikes the city of Tokyo. Following the huge Japanese box office success of *Godzilla* (*Gojira*), Toho, the film's producer, released a torrent of sci-fi monster movies in the ensuing years — but none as empathetic or emblematic as the original *Godzilla*, released at a time when the country was reeling from nuclear attack and testing in the Pacific. Its raging radioactive creature is an icon of modernism. (Ishirō Honda, 1954, subtitles, 96 minutes)

Mothra

Fri Jul 5 (3:00)

Toho's sci-fi fantasy *Mothra* (*Mosura*), written by Shinichi Sekizawa and starring beloved comic actor Frankie Sakai, follows an outing to an island test site where, among other wonders, a pair of miniature singing princesses cracks open an oversize egg. The giant larva swims to Japan and wreaks havoc on Tokyo. *Mothra* became Japan's second-most popular *kaijū eiga* (monster film) after *Godzilla* — with seven sequels and a trilogy. (Ishirō Honda, 1961, 35mm, subtitles, 101 minutes)

Horse

Sat Jul 6 (12:30)

A poor farm girl (the radiant Hideko Takamine) adores the horse she has nurtured from birth, but finds out from officials that it will be seized and sold to the army. Naturally, the young woman fights to protect her beloved animal. *Horse* (*Uma*), with its portrayal of sacrifices suffered by humble Japanese farmers in remote mountainous locations, was Akira Kurosawa's final film as an assistant director before launching an independent career. (Kajirō Yamamoto and Akira Kurosawa, 1941, 35mm, subtitles, 128 minutes)

The Hidden Fortress

Sat Jul 6 (3:30)

The Japanese *chanbara eiga* (swordplay film) that inspired George Lucas to create *Star Wars*, *The Hidden Fortress* (*Kakushi Toride no San-Akunin*) tells the action-packed tale of a princess traveling through enemy terrain accompanied by a warrior and two ragtag comrades. The wittiest of Akira Kurosawa's samurai films, *The*

Hidden Fortress stars Toshirō Mifune who, in addition to his fabled movie actor reputation, was also a skilled horseman; he easily mastered the horseback combat sequences. Period swordplay films set in feudal Japan mixed folklore with melodrama and were created for a market seeking rousing entertainment. (Akira Kurosawa, 1958, 35mm, subtitles, 139 minutes)

Seven Samurai

Sun Jul 7 (4:00)

Seven Samurai (*Shichinin no Samurai*) elevated the ronin — a nomadic, masterless warrior of feudal Japan — to a privileged symbol in Japanese popular culture. Six roving ronin, trailed by an oddball rogue (Toshirō Mifune) who eventually proves his worth, agree to protect a poor country village from a gang of thieves. Filming of the final battle sequence was delayed more than once due to an inadequate number of available horses — and, when the shooting was finally scheduled, the battle was staged during one of the coldest months on record. (Akira Kurosawa, 1954, 35mm, subtitles, 207 minutes)

I Am a Cat

Fri Jul 12 (12:00)



Natsume Sōseki's classic 1905 novel *I Am a Cat* (*Wagahai wa Neko de Aru*) portrays middle-class humans from a Meiji period cat's point of view. In Kon Ichikawa's madcap film adaptation, charismatic actor Tatsuya Nakadai stars as the lead, an indolent and scatterbrained middle school teacher called Kushami. When the film opened, a *New York Times* reviewer praised the performance of the cat who, for a while, keeps a feline sweetheart — “though his affair goes no better than those of everyone else in the story.” (Kon Ichikawa, 1975, 35mm, subtitles, 116 minutes)

Black Cat

Fri Jul 12 (2:30)

In *Black Cat* (*Kuroneko*), a classic tale of medieval Japan, provincial female ghosts with catlike features avenge past abuses by attacking the throats of traveling samurai. When the governor sends a warrior to suppress these disturbances, the unsuspecting young fighter meets his match in an electrifying struggle with these mystical feline demons. (Kaneto Shindō, 1968, 35mm, subtitles, 99 minutes)

Animals in Animation I: Kōji Yamamura and Image Forum

Sat Jul 13 (12:30)

A program of recent and classic animated shorts from Kōji Yamamura — a celebrated illustrator of children's literature and independent creator of music videos and delicate animated drawings — includes *The Old Crocodile*, *Natural History*, *Short Happy Life of a Goldfish*, *Zodiac One Third*, *Amefuri Kumanoko*, and *Anthology with Cranes* (Kōji Yamamura, 1985–2016). Yamamura's films are followed by *A Place Where There Are Moths* (Mika Seike, 2001) and *The Mechanism of Spring* (Atsushi Wada, 2010) — selected from the famed Image Forum, the largest art film festival in Japan. (Total running time approximately 50 minutes)

Animals in Animation II: Osamu Tezuka and Kihachirō Kawamoto

Sat Jul 13 (2:00)



Renowned animator Osamu Tezuka's *Legend of the Forest*, inspired by Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4* in F Minor, uses this orchestral music as a score. Tezuka (1928–1989) worked on his short film for a decade, never quite completing his original

concept — a survey of the history of animation styles in tribute to the art form. In this first installment we see the manga character Mosa, a flying squirrel, steeling himself against forest invaders. (Osamu Tezuka, 1987, 29 minutes)

Two shorts by famed puppetmaker and animator Kihachirō Kawamoto (1925–2010) — *Dōjōji Temple* (1978, 16mm, 19 minutes), a heartbreaking tale of amour fou between a young priest and a widow, and *House of Flames* (1976, 16mm, 19 minutes), based on the legend of a poet and a warrior infatuated with the same beautiful woman — feature animal forms from dragons to dogs. (Total running time approximately 70 minutes)

Cinema Kabuki: Triple Lion Dance followed by Heron Maiden

Sat Jul 13 (4:00)

In *Triple Lion Dance* (*Renjishi*), a father and his sons become powerful beasts who test their relationships. This legendary performance is renowned not only for the famous Kabuki master Kanzaburō, but also for his real-life sons Kankurō and Shichinosuke as the younger lions — a showcase for three of Japan's best theatrical artists. *Triple Lion Dance* is part of the series *Cinema Kabuki*, a production of Shochiku. (Yōji Yamada, 2008, subtitles, 55 minutes)

Shifting from a white heron to a coquettish girl to a woman seducing her lover, *Heron Maiden* is one of the most demanding roles in Kabuki. With fifteen musicians on stage and quick costume changes in swirling snow, the dance is performed here by Bandō Tamasaburō V, a celebrated *onnagata* (male actor specializing in female roles). Entering the repertoire in the eighteenth century, *Heron Maiden*, in this iteration, was recorded live at Kabuki-za Theatre, Tokyo, in 2005. (Hiroyuki Nakatani, 2005, subtitles, 32 minutes)

Mādadayo

Sun Jul 14 (4:00)



Mādadayo's sweetly sentimental account of a retired professor and his dutiful students was a digression for Akira Kurosawa, who generally did not dabble in such slender tales. Tatsuo Matsumura plays real-life author and academic Hyakken Uchida (1889–1971), whom we encounter at the end of his career, greeting his final classes with impish good humor. Sensei, as he is called, settles in with his books

and writing desk, as well as a pet cat, whose apparent departure provides an emotional interlude. (Akira Kurosawa, 1993, 35mm, subtitles, 134 minutes)

Akanishi Kakita

Fri Jul 19 (12:30)



In the 1930s, Mansaku Itami (father of Jūzō Itami, who directed the 1985 film *Tampopo*) adapted Shiga Naoya's popular 1917 novella *Akanishi Kakita* for the screen. A poor, over-the-hill, cat-loving samurai is charged with the task of spying on a rebel clan from within. Bold for its era, *Akanishi Kakita* playfully lampoons male heroism and the samurai code as its star, Chiezō Kataoka, enacts two roles — the lowly samurai and the enemy lord. (Mansaku Itami, 1936, 35mm, subtitles, 77 minutes)

If Cats Disappeared from the World

Fri Jul 19 (2:30)

When a young worker receives a terminal diagnosis, he makes a deal with the devil (who is in fact his doppelgänger): for each additional day of life the man is granted, the devil will remove one worldly delight. Each of the ensuing losses, especially the cat he inherits from his mother, radically alters the man's life history. *If Cats Disappeared from the World* (*Sekai kara Neko ga Kieta nara*) mixes fantasy and emotion with a deeper philosophical inquiry. (Akira Nagai, 2016, subtitles, 100 minutes)

Pom Poko

Sat Jul 27 (12:30)



The heroes of Isao Takahata's anime *Pom Poko* are the tanuki, the fabled shape-shifting Japanese raccoon dogs. Beginning in the

1960s, tanuki of the ancient Tama Hills near Tokyo are alarmed by the reckless construction of houses and shopping centers bordering their homes. They finally join together to fight back, practicing their ancient art of transformation into human forms and even staging a grand deception by shifting the newly developed land back into its primeval state. Director Takahata was a founder of the prestigious production house Studio Ghibli. (Isao Takahata, 1994, 35mm, subtitles, 119 minutes)

Princess Raccoon

Sat Jul 27 (3:30)

Seijun Suzuki's quirky and colorful operetta is a folkloric tale of young love inspired by the form of the raccoon dog (tanuki). *Princess Raccoon* (*Operetta tanuki goten*) stars Zhang Ziyi as a shape-shifting tanuki princess and Joe Odagiri as Prince Amechiyo, in danger because he has displaced his father Azuchi Momoyama (Mikijirō Hira) as the most beautiful man in the kingdom. Intrigue, trickery, and romance ensue as the young princess saves the day, absconding with the prince to her own palace. (Seijun Suzuki, 2005, 35mm, subtitles, 110 minutes)

Dreams

Sun Jul 28 (4:00)



In eight beguiling vignettes inspired by recurring dreams, Akira Kurosawa follows his surrogate self through the stages of life. In the final dream, "Village of the Water Mills," a wise old man describes the rewards of living a simpler life without the conveniences provided by advanced technologies. A subtext of *Dreams* is the beauty and primacy of nature, with a gentle admonition about its conservation and perpetuation. Animal forms are leitmotifs, frequently accentuating this premise. (Akira Kurosawa, 1990, 35mm, subtitles, 119 minutes)

Moons and Celestial Bodies

Jul 20 – 21

Since the dawn of cinema, filmmakers have imagined what it might be like to travel to the moon and beyond. Following Georges Méliès's whimsical *A Trip to the Moon* in 1902, the fusion of scientific exploration and humankind's artistic imagination gave rise to evermore ingenious conceptions of space travel. This series, presented in conjunction with the exhibition *By the Light of the Silvery Moon: A Century of Lunar Photographs to Apollo 11*, includes a screening of Philip Kaufman's *The Right Stuff*, a digital restoration of Nicolas Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, and an eclectic international program of vintage and contemporary short films showcasing the moon as inspiration and focus — coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the first human steps on the moon.

The Right Stuff

Sat Jul 20 (11:00)



An epic adaptation of Tom Wolfe's 1979 book, *The Right Stuff* follows the saga of the aeronautical test pilots involved in Project Mercury, the United States' first manned space mission. Although focused primarily on the well-known "space cowboys" Chuck Yeager, John Glenn, and Alan Shepard (Sam Shepard, Ed Harris, and Scott Glenn, respectively), the film also delves into the effects of their ambitions and accomplishments on their families. (Philip Kaufman, 1983, 35mm, 192 minutes)

Cycles, Tides, and Rhythms: The Moon on Film

Sat Jul 20 (3:00)

From avant-garde to animation, narrative, and nonfiction, films about the moon have made the orb an object of mystery and metaphor. This eclectic assemblage of classic and recent shorts includes *A Trip to the Moon* (George Méliès, 1902, silent); *Rabbit's Moon* (Kenneth Anger, 1950); *Polly One* (Kevin Jerome Everson, 2018, silent); *Dancing on the Moon* (Dave Fleischer, 1935, 35mm); *Moonplay* (Marie Menken, 1962, 16mm); *Red Sea* (Judith Noble, 1982, 16mm, silent); *Sea of Vapors* (Sylvia Schedelbauer, 2014); *Lunar Almanac* (Malena Szlam, 2013, 16mm, silent); and several more. (Total running time approximately 120 minutes)

The Man Who Fell to Earth

Sun Jul 21 (4:30)



A striking contribution to the science-fiction genre as well as a cautionary tale about the protection of natural resources, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* features David Bowie in his acting debut as an alien sent to our planet to source water for his own. British director Nicolas Roeg's surreal mise-en-scène and Tony Richmond's sumptuous cinematography make the most of Bowie's considerable screen presence. The film's narrative ellipses serve to emphasize enduring existential qualities of estrangement and despair. (Nicolas Roeg, 1974, 148 minutes)





Essential Cinema:

Jonas Mekas

Aug 3 – Sep 1

Born in the rural village of Semeniškiai, near Biržai, Lithuania, filmmaker, poet, writer, and cultural activist Jonas Mekas (1922 – 2019) is widely considered one of the most prolific and influential artists of his generation. His wide-ranging work encompasses five decades of visionary films and videos, many of which take the form of intimate visual diaries — unpolished, impressionistic, and crafted from fragments of footage captured after he arrived in New York from a displaced person's camp following World War II. With his brother Adolfas, he started the journal *Film Culture* in 1954; he became the first film writer for *The Village Voice*, penning the influential "Movie Journal" column promoting the work of avant-garde filmmakers; and he was a founder of Anthology Film Archives and the artist-run Film-Makers' Cooperative. But it is the lyric, poetic qualities of his vision, combined with an affinity for the intuitive, playful, and fortuitous style of New York's postwar art communities that give Mekas's art its power. With thanks to the Film-Makers' Cooperative, Embassy of Lithuania, Philip Brookman, and MM Serra.

Guns of the Trees

followed by **The Brig**

Oona Mekas, Sebastian Mekas, and MM Serra in person

Sat Aug 3 (2:00)

With a cast of friends and supporters that included his brother Adolfas, Frances Stillman, Ben Carruthers, and Allen Ginsberg, Mekas made his first film, a portrait of a young woman struggling to come to grips with an imperfect world. "*Guns of the Trees* deals with the thoughts, feelings, and anguished strivings of my generation, faced with the moral perplexity of our times. . . . Scenes act like pieces of a larger, timed, emotional mosaic. Where the direct word, or the direct image, fails — when we come to more essential things — the indirectness of the poet will seize the essence and the truth" — Jonas Mekas. (1962, 16mm, 75 minutes)

The Brig was based on an off-Broadway production by the Living Theatre, an influential avant-garde theater group that became one of the first in the United States to produce works by modernists such as Bertolt Brecht and Gertrude Stein. "As I watched [*The Brig*] I thought: suppose this was a real brig; suppose I was a newsreel reporter; suppose I got permission from the US Marine Corps to go into one of their brigades and film the goings-on: what a document one could bring to the eyes of humanity" — Jonas Mekas. (1964, 16mm, 68 minutes)

Walden

Sun Aug 4 (4:00)



Commissioned by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and originally titled *Diaries, Notes, and Sketches*, *Walden* premiered in 1968. Filming in color and black and white, Jonas Mekas used a handheld 16mm Bolex to chronicle a variety of quotidian events in his life: walks around New York, visits with family and friends (including Lou Reed, John Lennon, and Yoko Ono), and glimpses of the natural world captured with unexpected beauty amid the skyscrapers of Manhattan. Exemplifying his rhythmic, almost chaotic, camera style as a diarist, "all footage," Mekas wrote, "is exactly as it came out from the camera. There was no way of achieving it in the editing room without destroying its form and content." (filmed 1964–1968, edited 1968–1969, 16mm, 180 minutes)

Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania

preceded by **Notes on the Circus** and **Time and Fortune**

Vietnam Newsreel

Introduced by David James

Sat Aug 10 (2:00)

Jonas Mekas described his short *Notes on the Circus* as "Ringling Bros., filmed in three sessions (three-ring circus), with no post-editing, five rolls strung together as they came out of a camera. Jim Kweskin's Jug Band prepared the soundtrack." (1966, 16mm, sound, 12 minutes)

Time and Fortune Vietnam Newsreel is a fake interview with Lapland's War Minister about the Vietnam War. "A few practical suggestions are given, among them a suggestion to turn the conduction of war over to the Mafia" — Jonas Mekas. (1968, 16mm, 4 minutes)

Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania is a bold, poetic, and highly personal diary film of the Mekas brothers' return to their home village of Semeniškiai, Lithuania, since their escape twenty-seven years prior. The film was accepted into the Library of Congress National Film Registry in 2006 for its cultural, aesthetic, and historical significance. (1971–1972, 16mm, 82 minutes)

Paradise Not Yet Lost (a.k.a. Oona's Third Year)

preceded by **Self-Portrait**

Introduced by David James

Sat Aug 10 (4:00)

"These reels of my film diaries contain the film 'notes' taken during the calendar year 1977, arranged chronologically. We see a lot of home life and the city. We see a lot of our daughter Oona whose third year of life this is. It's a diary film but also a meditation on the theme of Paradise. It is a letter to Oona; to serve her, some day, as a distant reminder of how the world around her looked during the third year of her life — a period of which there will be only tiny fragments left — and to provide her with a romantic's guide to the essential values of life in a world of artificiality, commercialism, and bodily and spiritual poison." — Jonas Mekas (1979, 16mm, 96 minutes)

Self-Portrait, in which Mekas speaks frankly about his life and cinema, precedes the feature. (1980, video, 20 minutes)

Lost Lost Lost

Sun Aug 11 (4:00)



Shot mostly in black and white, *Lost Lost Lost* is perhaps Mekas's best-known compilation of the 16mm film reels that he shot almost daily since the age of twenty-seven. In the late sixties, he began to edit poetic long-form features from this growing archive that documented his family, friends, travels, and walks around New York City's neighborhoods. *Lost Lost Lost* focuses on the Lithuanian community in Brooklyn, Manhattan's East Village (where he wrote about cinema and mingled with filmmakers, beat writers, and musicians), and Vermont (where the rural hills recalled his lost European childhood). Ultimately the film is about resettlement and the immigrant's experience of rebirth in America, and how the past was transformed as he pushed traditional boundaries of art and life. (1976, 16mm, 178 minutes)

He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life

Introduced by Philip Brookman

Sat Aug 17 (2:00)

Continuing the poetic recording of his life story, *He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life* is a film of high spirits.

"Consisting of brief sketches, portraits of people I have spent time with, places, seasons of the year, weather, many of my filmmaker friends such as Hans Richter, [Roberto] Rossellini, Marcel Hanoun, Adolfo Arrieta, Henri Langlois, [Alberto] Cavalcanti... or just friends... Andy Warhol, Richard Foreman, P. Adams Sitney, Raimund Abraham, Hermann Nitsch, Allen Ginsberg, George Maciunas, and countless others — brief escapes into nature, celebrations of life that has gone by and remains only as recorded in these personal, brief sketches. 'You keep a diary and the diary will keep you,' Mae West to Peter Beard" — Jonas Mekas. (1969/1985, 16mm, 150 minutes)

Short Films: 1982 – 1996

Sun Aug 18 (4:30)



This compilation of five shorts from the 1980s and 1990s includes *Scenes from the Life of Andy Warhol* (1982, 16mm, 36 minutes); *Street Songs* (1983, 16mm, 10 minutes); *Imperfect 3-Image Films* (1985, 16mm, 4 minutes); *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas* (1992, 16mm, 35 minutes); and *Happy Birthday to John* (1996, 16mm, sound, 24 minutes) (Total running time 109 minutes)

Birth of a Nation

preceded by **This Side of Paradise: Fragments of an Unfinished Biography**

Sun Aug 25 (4:30)

Jonas Mekas was invited in the late 1960s to bring his Bolex to Andy Warhol's Montauk estate in order to instruct the Kennedy children in filmmaking — a diversion in the wake of John F. Kennedy's death. Later, he transformed his footage using techniques such as under- and overexposure, repetition, and jump cuts to lend this intimate home movie footage a special strangeness and intensity. *This Side of Paradise: Fragments of an Unfinished Biography* is a haunting portrait of this mythical family, showing ordinary folk in a celebration of life. (1999, 16mm, 35 minutes)

Birth of a Nation was described by Mekas as "one hundred and sixty portraits or rather appearances, sketches, and glimpses of avant-garde, independent filmmakers and film activists between 1955 and 1996. Why *Birth of a Nation*? Because the film independent IS a nation in itself. We are surrounded by commercial cinema nation, same way as the indigenous people of the United States or of any other country are surrounded by Ruling Powers. We are the invisible, but essential nation of cinema." Music by Richard Wagner and Hermann Nitsch. Voice by Jean Houston. (1997, 16mm, 85 minutes)

Sleepless Night Stories

Sat Aug 31 (2:00)

"Under the influence of insomnia and red wine, Mekas meanders, muses, and trains his inquisitive camera on everything from obliging friends (Ken Jacobs, Marina Abramović, Patti Smith) to errant lizards, possums, and postcards. Underlying the artist's scattershot narrative and amateurish, out-of-focus aesthetic is an unflagging faith in the arrived-upon moment, the poetry of spontaneity" — Eric Hynes. (2011, SD video, 114 minutes)

Notes on an American Film Director at Work:

Martin Scorsese

Sun Sep 1 (12:00)

Asked to film Martin Scorsese as he was making *The Departed*, Jonas Mekas worked with his son Sebastian to produce *Notes on an American Film Director at Work: Martin Scorsese*. "We all had a great time because we all love Marty. It's a chamber kind of movie, a personal tribute to a friend" — Jonas Mekas. (2005, SD video, 80 minutes)

Out-Takes from the Life of a Happy Man

Sun Sep 1 (2:00)

Lovingly pieced together from scenes that were either cut from or never used in Jonas Mekas's earlier diary films, *Out-Takes from the Life of a Happy Man* pushes the boundaries of this form that he pioneered in the late 1960s. It mixes footage of the past — family, friends, travel, and nature — with contemporary scenes of Mekas editing the film at his worktable. Sometimes overexposed or faded, his old footage lends an impressionistic, dreamlike quality to this memoir, helping us envision the past through fragments of the filmmaker's wildly sensitive observations. *Out-Takes* toys with the question of whether cinema represents memories or documents the perceived truths of everyday life. (2012, SD video, 68 minutes)



Thomas Edison Black Maria: Selections from the Festival

Aug 24

For thirty-eight years, the Thomas Edison Black Maria Film Festival has been advancing the unique creativity and power of the short form. The festival is named for Thomas Edison's original West Orange, New Jersey, film studio, whose resemblance to the familiar black box-shaped police paddy wagons sparked the nickname "Black Maria." Black Maria is an annual international juried competition open to all genres and filmmakers across the globe. In 2019, the festival announced its partnership with the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University. The films for the two programs at the National Gallery of Art were chosen from the award winners selected for the festival's 2019 tour. Executive Director Jane Steuerwald introduces both events.

Black Maria Program 1

Sat Aug 24 (1:00)

Koka, the Butcher (Bence Máté and Florian Schewe, 2018, 37 minutes); *I'd Never Bother Another Chicken Again* (Helen Cho Anthos, 2018, 4 minutes); *Rabbit Tracks* (Luke Jaeger, 2018, 4 minutes); *The Last Guide* (Cristian Gomes, 2018, 16 minutes); *A Feeling for Leaving* (Dan Boord and Luis Valdovino, 2018, 9 minutes); *The Elephant's Song* (Lynn Tomlinson, 2018, 8 minutes); *Woody's Order!* (Seth Kramer and Ann Talman, 2018, 16 minutes)

Black Maria Program 2

Sat Aug 24 (3:30)

Random Thoughts (Steven Vander Meer, 2018, 7 minutes); *Twilight* (Richard Reeves, 2018, 2 minutes); *Brainworm Billy* (Emily Hubley, 2018, 3 minutes); *Ulyses/Ulysses* (Jorge Malpica, 2018, 8 minutes); *What Aristotle Said* (David Gross, 2018, 4 minutes); *Henrietta Bulkowski* (Rachel Johnson, 2018, 15 minutes); *Chula, with Invisible Strings* (Emily Collins, 2018, 10 minutes); *Thy Kingdom Come* (Eugene Richards, 2018, 42 minutes)



Barbara Hammer: Boundless

Sep 7 – 22

For more than half a century, artist and filmmaker Barbara Hammer (1939 – 2019) created works unique in sensibility, subject matter, and influence. Exploring lesbian identity, politics, and personal narrative, and delving into visceral manifestations of pleasure, pain, aging, and infirmity, Hammer used the camera as an extension of her body to discover ways of communicating experience. Her purposeful engagement with audiences fostered and influenced many generations of filmmakers, and her groundbreaking work shaped contemporary film culture in multiple ways. This series includes examples of films and videos that Hammer made in shorter formats, although her oeuvre also embraced feature-length and performance works. With special thanks to Florrie Burke, and to Carmel Curtis and Joan Hawkins who organized the first iteration of *Barbara Hammer: Boundless* at Indiana University. The series includes new prints courtesy of the Academy Film Archive, as well as restorations by Electronic Arts Intermix and the Academy through the National Film Preservation Foundation and the Film Foundation.

The Beginning: Early Short Films, 1968 – 1980

Sat Sep 7 (2:00)

From the start of her filmmaking practice, Barbara Hammer was committed to visibility through portraiture — of herself, others, and communities of women. “My strategy . . . throughout the '70s was to put a lesbian body on the screen, to bring a lesbian subjectivity to film, to question heteronormative experimental film,” she said. This program of new 16mm prints includes *Schizy* (1968, from 8mm), where the artist confronts gender play; *Jane Brakhage* (1975), a portrait of well-known experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage's first wife; and *Double Strength* (1978), a poetic portrayal of Hammer's relationship with trapeze artist Terry Sendgraff, among other titles. (Total running time 94 minutes)

The Middle: Short Films from the 1980s

Sat Sep 7 (4:00)



Developing her optical printing techniques and utilizing the increasingly accessible mediums of analogue video and early computer imagery, Barbara Hammer's work in the 1980s continued to address media representations of women, including women's views of their own sexuality, as opposed to the male view. Included are *Sync Touch* (1981), "a lesbian/feminist aesthetic proposing the connection between touch and sight to be the basis for a 'new cinema'" (Canyon Cinema); *Audience* (1982), a self-described diary of audience reactions from several public and international presentations of Hammer's work; and the critique *Snow Job: The Media Hysteria of AIDS* (1988), among other titles. (Total running time 80 minutes)

Hammer Time: Collaboration and Community

Jennifer Lange, KJ Mohr, Lynne Sachs,
and Deborah Stratman in person

Sun Sep 8 (4:00)

Barbara Hammer developed unique artistic collaborations with other filmmakers and supporters. This event includes screenings and discussions with several collaborating artists and with Jennifer Lange, curator of Film/Video at the Wexner Center for the Arts, an artist-in-residence program where Hammer produced and screened many works. Titles include *Maya Deren's Sink* (2011, 30 minutes), filmed on location (with KJ Mohr) at Deren's homes in New York City and Los Angeles; *Vever (for Barbara)* (Deborah Stratman, 2019, 12 minutes), incorporating footage Hammer recorded in 1970s Guatemala; and two recent titles by Lynne Sachs: a short triptych of influential artists, *Carolee, Barbara, and Gunvor* (2018, 8 minutes), and *A Month of Single Frames* (2019, 15 minutes). (Total running time 65 minutes)

The Never Ending

Sun Sep 22 (4:00)



Barbara Hammer's focus on physicality and the body continued throughout her life, as did a sustained exploration into the aging process, the ramifications of illness, and an unflinching perspective on the act of dying. *Sanctus* (1990, 19 minutes) is woven from X-ray footage recorded in the 1950s by Dr. James Sibley Watson; it is followed by *A Horse Is Not a Metaphor* (2008, 30 minutes), the artist's depiction of her own struggle with the diagnoses and treatment of ovarian cancer. For Hammer, "... cancer is not a 'battle,' cancer is a disease. There are aberrant cells not 'deadly foes.' She is not 'combative and brave,' she is living with cancer. She is not going to win or lose her 'battle.' She is not a 'survivor,' she is living with cancer...." The program concludes with a single-channel version of the multi-channel installation *Evidentiary Bodies* (2018, 11 minutes), Hammer's last completed work. (Total running time 60 minutes)





Serious Games: Documentary Art between Fact and Fiction

Sep 7 – 28

Various cinematic genres and movements over the years have laid claim to truth in cinema — the *actualités* of the Lumière brothers, *Kino-Pravda* espoused by Dziga Vertov, the “ethnofiction” anthropological films of Jean Rouch, and the “ecstatic truth” of Werner Herzog’s documentaries are but a few examples. Although the documentary is still a viable cinematic genre, many filmmakers have now expanded the range of their practice to create works that cross between art and anthropology, documentary and fiction, education and entertainment, and galleries and movie theaters. *Serious Games: Documentary Art between Fact and Fiction* explores a cross section of documentary practice by German filmmakers and artists focusing on the subject of war and conflict. Blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, these works also demonstrate the fluidity of exhibition practice between the black box of the cinema and the white cube of the gallery. Presented in association with Goethe-Institut Washington, with special thanks to Zach Feldman for organizing the program.

Lessons of Darkness

Sat Sep 7 (12:00)

Lessons of Darkness presents the burning oil fields of Kuwait as an alien landscape scarred by the Gulf War. Ostensibly a documentary about the firefighters tasked with extinguishing the burning wells, Werner Herzog's film bends these realities into a nihilistic narrative by emphasizing the relentlessness and even futility of their work. The subdued voice-over, characteristic of Herzog's films, serves to distance the viewer from the media-saturated environment of the war while challenging familiar documentary conventions in favor of poetic and philosophical meditation. (Werner Herzog, 1992, 54 minutes)

Again/Noch Einmal

Mario Pfeifer, Lutz Koepnick, Nora M. Alter,
and Zach Feldman in person

Sat Sep 14 (12:30)

Originally screened in the 2018 Berlin Biennale as a two-channel installation video, *Again/Noch Einmal* by artist Mario Pfeifer probes the actions of a group of men who forcibly restrain an Iraqi refugee following a confrontation in a grocery store in Germany. Divided between those who saw the event as an act of civil courage and others who viewed it as racially motivated vigilantism, extralegal jurors — facilitated by two familiar German crime TV actors, Den-
nesch Zoudé and Mark Waschke — grapple with the reenacted scenario. Playing with the medium of pulpy German *Krimis* (crime dramas), often based on real-life events, Pfeifer engages the audience to consider why individuals arrive at differing narratives from identical facts. (Mario Pfeifer, 2018, 40 minutes) *Discussion follows with Mario Pfeifer, Lutz Koepnick (Vanderbilt University), and Nora M. Alter (Temple University), moderated by Zach Feldman (Vanderbilt University)*

November

followed by *In Free Fall*

Sat Sep 28 (1:00)



Invoking Sergei Eisenstein's revolutionary *October* (1928), artist Hito Steyerl avows, "November is the time after *October*, a time when revolution seems to be over, and peripheral struggles have become particular, localist, and almost impossible to communicate." Exhibited at *Documenta 12* (2007), the film loosely follows Steyerl's childhood friend, sociologist Andrea Wolf, and the appropriation of her likeness as an icon of martyrdom. Steyerl plays up the

dissemination of images in the digital age and the stories inscribed to them, while delivering a scathing critique of Germany's armed involvement in foreign affairs. (Hito Steyerl, 2004, 30 minutes)

Following the financial crisis of 2008, Hito Steyerl sets her film *In Free Fall* in a graveyard for scrapped airplanes in the Mojave Desert. Featuring Hollywood aviation disaster montages, interviews with the junkyard proprietor, an actor portraying an aeronautics expert, and an out-of-work cinematographer, the title evokes a double entendre connecting aviation and economic crashes. Like many of Steyerl's works, *In Free Fall* confounds the distinction between documentary and fiction to articulate themes such as workers' labor, the culture industry, and the ills of capitalism. (Hito Steyerl, 2010, 30 minutes)

War at a Distance

followed by *Serious Games I – IV*

Wed Sep 11 (6:30); This event takes place at Goethe-Institut Washington. For more information go to www.goethe.de/washington



Under what Harun Farocki has termed "operational images" (having neither entertainment nor informational value), the processes of factory production and battlefield attacks are distanced from human experience by extending the access of vision. As suggested by the film's German title *Erkennen und Verfolgen* (*Recognize and Track*), *War at a Distance* depicts alienation from both manufacturing and weaponry by way of operational images and autonomous computer-assisted image processing replacing human labor. (Harun Farocki, 2003, 54 minutes) *This event takes place at Goethe-Institut Washington. For more information go to www.goethe.de/washington*

Serious Games I – IV, Harun Farocki's four-part multichannel installation, begins with a computer-generated video game used to train soldiers for armed conflict and concludes with a virtual reality therapy session. Usually displayed as a gallery installation, the films screened here in a theatrical setting demonstrate how instructional videos and games are utilized for the human conditioning required in fighting wars. Farocki invites viewers to consider how the same images are used as didactic tools for both military training and psychological counseling. (Harun Farocki, 2009 – 2010, 46 minutes) *This event takes place at Goethe-Institut Washington. For more information go to www.goethe.de/washington*





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Films are shown in the East Building Auditorium, unless otherwise noted, in original formats whenever possible. Seating for all events is on a first-come, first-seated basis. Doors open thirty minutes before showtime. For more information, visit nga.gov/film, email film-department@nga.gov, or call (202) 842-6799.

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Yōji Yamada, *Cinema Kabuki: Triple Lion Dance*, 2008 p19



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